Welcome Back!

The Human Rights Program is gearing up for a great academic year, and we hope that you will be a part of it! Join us for events, lectures, and get-togethers. Important deadlines this year include:

- November 7: Deadline to submit Degree Applications for May 2015 graduation
- November 10: Advance registration for Spring 2015 Term begins
- March 27: Deadline for Class of 2017 to submit Major Declaration Forms
- April 1: Study Away Deadlines

New Beginnings

By: Anne L. Arnzen, ‘14

As students at an institution of higher learning, it is important to question what are we learning and what are we teaching? How does community learning help us to understand the issues that we read about and discuss in class? How does the opportunity for interaction with those whose life experience is completely different from ours, enhance understanding and knowledge on both sides? And where do the arts fit into this picture?

The group New Beginnings stemmed from a Trinity College course cross-listed between Human Rights and Theater and Dance entitled Human Rights Through Performance. In the course, Professor Judy Dworin focuses on the U.S. prison system, looking at the human rights issues and the possibility of the arts as a mode of hope and healing. In 2010, a group of students in the course were inspired by their experience with Professor Dworin’s writing and performance group at York.

With the help of Professor Dworin, this initial group of students led by Jocelyn Schur contacted Community Partners in Action (CPA), an organization that assists previously incarcerated women with the re-entry process. That first year, the Trinity students met once a week with women from CPA’s Resettlement House to engage in various arts activities. Building upon their early idea, the group has grown and evolved over the past four years. New Beginnings is now the community learning component of a course, ThDn 348—Arts and Special Populations, taught by Professor Dworin in the fall semester. The students who facilitate the weekly sessions have studied the issues of incarceration and reentry, as well as the power of arts programming. (Cont’d, pg. 2)
NEW BEGINNINGS (CONT’D FROM PAGE 1)

The group is academically termed “community learning.” As Anne Arnzen a senior at Trinity explains, “reflecting back on my time at Trinity, I can honestly say that I have learned life lessons from the women and students of New Beginnings, that I could never gained while sitting in a class. Sharing our life stories and lived wisdom, I have learned what it means to endure atrocities, overcome obstacles with grace, and face the future with faith and perseverance.” This sentiment was mirrored by many of the women and students in New Beginnings.

Brenda, a member of the Resettlement House, who is also currently studying social work, reflected “I was nervous at first. But, the group helped me open up and tell my story. You all taught me how to love myself and not let life knock me down.” Each year, new women and students join the group. As Brenda eloquently stated, each new member is welcomed into a community founded on the tenents of support, trust, consistency, and transparency.

The Trinity students design the arts activities around a given theme each semester with some guidance from Professor Dworin. The various art modalities include singing, dance, storytelling, drawing, and collaging. The weekly arts activities culminate in a final performance, open to the public, at the end of each semester. Although the Trinity students design the evening, the process that takes place is shaped by both the students and women. Nicole, a student at Trinity, reflects “New Beginnings holds a very special place in my heart. As much as we have been there as a support system for the women, the women have been a source of strength and inspiration for me. To hear about what they have been through and to see their strength and positivity, reminds me to fight my own demons.” Nicole illustrates how, in many ways, the women of Resettlement have become teachers for the Trinity Students. Tamara, a woman from the Resettlement House, furthers Nicole’s sentiment, “As the young women and men of Trinity College open up to us with honesty and growth from their hearts, we the women of the Resettlement CPA learn more from them than they will ever know.”

The role of “teacher” is shared by the women and students.

This past fall, the final performance was shaped around the theme of Journey’s. The prompt “in my shoes”, illustrated that the women and students come from very different walks of life. Although the differences in our life stories are always evident, it is the commonalities among the students and women that become clear each semester. Discovering our similarities and strengths as a group, in many ways New Beginnings has become a family. Returning to Trinity after being abroad in the Spring, Arnzen reflected “it wasn’t until I returned to New Beginnings on my first Monday back, that I felt like I had arrived home.”

We hope you will join us in the learning experience through the courses Human Rights Through Performance or Arts and Special Populations.

“The Charter of the United Nations expresses the noblest aspirations of man: abjuration of force in the settlement of disputes between states; the assurance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; the safeguarding of international peace and security.”

Haile Selassie.
EVENTS

Join us on October 1st starting at 4:30 pm at Cinestudio for an Evening with Filmmaker and Visiting A.K. Smith Scholar, Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri (’81) as she presents:

The Social Imaginary: Society, Gender, and Politics in Iranian Documentaries

Afternoon Lecture at 4:30 pm: Filmmaker and Visiting Allan K. Smith Scholar, Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri (’81) will discuss the personal documentary filmmaking movement in Iran, and the way it reflects gender and social politics in relation to place.

A reception will follow the lecture.

Evening film showing will begin at 7:30 pm.

The evening will include a showing of documentary films introduced by Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri, including:

Road to Kurdistan (2013) 51 min. by Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri - The filmmaker and her family try to explore their heritage in Kurdistan. They begin a road trip and cross the border to Iraqi Kurdistan to explore the difficult history of the region and find the tomb of poet Mastoureh. They take along a young musician who wants to promote his music in Suleimaniya, Iraq.

Unwelcome in Tehran (2008) - 53 min. by Mina Keshavarz - A personal film about Mina’s separation from her husband and her quest to see how single women live independently in Tehran.

Dream of Silk (2003) by Nahid Rezai - 40 min. - The filmmaker returns to her all-girl school twenty-five years later to explore the lives of young girls in contemporary Tehran. In this candid exploration of their dreams and hopes, the girls are at times shockingly open, often sweet, and occasionally sad as they talk about the future.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

The Trinity College chapter of Amnesty International is a small group of very dedicated student activists working to promote, raise awareness of, and engage the Trinity College campus with local, national, and international human rights issues through the frameworks of Amnesty International. We hold a wide range of topic or issue-focused events, bring speakers to campus, run awareness and letter-signing campaigns, sponsor monthly newsletters and film screenings, and work with Hartford-area organizations and other Trinity organizations.

What is Amnesty International (the national organization)? We are people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights. Our purpose is to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied. We investigate and expose abuses, educate and mobilize the public, and help transform societies to create a safer, more just world. Our vision is of a world in which every person - regardless of race, religion, gender, or ethnicity - enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

Learn more by visiting: https://trinity.collegiatelink.net/organization/amnesty-international/about

Meeting Times: Mondays at 8:30 PM at the Community Service Office

“Human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that create huge inequalities.”

Pope Francis.
Human Rights—Which One Speaks to You?

From Amnesty International—USA

Visit: www.amnestyusa.org for more information on how you can involve


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